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ABSTRACT

This study hypothesizes that professional women will have more intra- and inter-role conflict than their male professional counterparts. Data were collected from male and female employees at a major midwestern university in three occupational groups--faculty, academic-professional, and nonacademic. Inter- and intra-role conflict data were collected using the following set of response measures: (1) Kahn's job-related tension index, (2) three questions asking the person to judge how much conflict he or she feels between simultaneous demands on their time, (3) a set of questions relating how people divide their time on a typical work day and weekend, (4) the Job Descriptive-Index, and (5) the General Motors Faces Scale. Results appear to dispel the myth that women have more inter- and intra-role conflict than men. The female sample spent less time at work and in family role activities than the professional men, and more time on personal activities and home maintenance. They perceived no more career-family responsibility conflict than the men did, but they did see their careers as interfering with keeping up their homes. In their jobs, the women perceived no more job-related tension than the men. They were significantly less involved with their jobs and were particularly dissatisfied with their opportunities for promotion. The female sample appears to have its multiple career and family roles suprisingly well synchronized. (Author/PC)

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The Professional Woman: Inter and Intra Role Conflict

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Each of us fulfills a variety of roles in pursuing our everyday activities, roles related to our careers, family responsibilities and personal interests. Each role carries with it a set of role relationships with other people. The requirements of the role itself, as well as the expectancies of the people who hold positions in our various role sets make certain behavioral demands upon us. When required multiple role behaviors are incompatible, we may experience role conflict and associated psychological tension and stress. Intra role conflict occurs when multiple demands for behavior within a role are incompatible: as when your department head thinks you should spend more time teaching but you would rather spend more time on your research (or vice versa). Inter role conflict occurs when the incompatible demands occur between roles: the final oral examination of a graduate student whom you have been supervising is scheduled at the same time that your youngest child stars as a frog in the kindergarten play. Both intra and inter role conflicts may be characterized by incompatible behavioral expectancies of role relevant others. The conflict may be one of disparate values or ability or perceived lack of ability. But perhaps the most predominant form of role conflict is one of priorities, or role overload. You may perceive all of the various role behavioral expectancies as legitimate, but recognize that it is impossible to satisfy all of them within the available time. Role overload must be dealt with by setting priorities and risking the displeasure of some of the people in your role set.

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Kahn et. al. (1964) in their theory of role dynamics present a general conceptualization appropriate for studying inter and intra role conflict between a variety of social roles. Their empirical research, however, focuses on occupational role conflict. They did not include women in their study and did not extend their research to study the effects of perceived conflict between occupational and other primary social roles as spouse or parent. Hall (1972) extended Kahn et. al.'s conceptualizations to model conflict between/among a person's primary social roles. He hypothesized, based on Killian's (1952) research on reactions to severe natural disasters, that women should experience greater inter role conflict than men, because women's multiple roles are likely to be salient simultaneously while men's multiple roles are more likely to operate sequentially. Simultaneous role demands require setting priorities, while sequential role demands set their own priorities. It would follow then from Hall's theorizing that women may not only experience more inter role conflict, but may also have more difficulties in coping with the conflict.

Hall's hypothesis regarding sex differences in degree of multiple role conflict and coping are largely untested since Hall and Gordon (1973) studied only women. Kahn et. al.'s findings regarding intra occupational role conflict cannot be generalized to women, since they studied only men. This study was designed to explore intra occupational role conflict and inter social role conflict for males and females holding full time jobs.

Extending Kahn et. al.'s results we would expect women and men holding high status jobs to experience higher levels of intra role conflict and job related tension. Hall's data indicate that married, employed women experience inter role conflict, particularly with respect to role overload. But is their inter role conflict greater than that of similarly employed men? Data collected from male and female employees in three occupational groups--

faculty, academic-professional, and non academic --at a major midwestern university provide a partial answer to these questions.

Method

Data on inter and intra role conflict were collected as a part of a larger mail survey of university employees. Subjects, stratified by employee group and sex, were selected randomly from twenty-one of the University's colleges or departments. Employee groups included faculty, professional academics--non teaching administrative and technical personnel, and non academics--clerical and service personnel. Professional academics were proportionally over represented in the sample due to design considerations of the larger study. Likewise women faculty and non-academic men were proportionately over represented in the sample since they were sampled to reflect the more even male-female distribution of the academic professional group.

Response rates (see Table 1) indicate the sample within each employee group is a good representation of the target sample. Between 73 and 84 percent of the eligible sample returned their questionnaires. Considering that this was a long (12 page) mail survey with no incentives and one follow up, the response rates were better than we expected.

Inter and intra role conflict data were collected using the following set of response measures:

1) Kahn et. al.'s (1964) job related tension index.

2) Three questions asking the person to judge how much conflict he or she feels between simultaneous demands on their time, including:

   a) job or career and maintenance of the home.

   b) job or career and personal activities.

   c) job or career and family responsibilities such as spouse, parent.

3) A set of questions relating to how people divide their time on a typical work day and weekend between:

a) sleep

b) job and career

c) maintenance of home

d) personal activities as hobbies, self improvement and recreation

e) family responsibilities as spouse, parent, etc.

Other indices in the questionnaire included the five scales from the Job Descriptive Index measuring satisfaction with work, supervision, pay, promotional opportunities, and co-workers (Smith, Kendall and Hulin, 1969); three motivation scales from Hackman and Lawler (1971) experienced motivation--the extent to which an employee says he feels good when he performs well and feels badly when he performs poorly, focus of motivation--the extent to which an employee experiences internal pressure to perform on a job, and job involvement--the degree to which employees feel personally involved with their work.

The General Motors Faces Scale (Kunin, 1955) was included once to measure employee's overall satisfaction with their job and again to assess satisfaction with their life in general.

All scales were scored according to their documented methods except for the job related tension scale. A factor analysis of these items based on a correlation matrix with R^2 communality estimates in the diagonal indicated

that the item "Feeling that your job tends to interfere with your family life and responsib'lities" did not scale.

The data were analyzed with a least squares multivariate analysis of variance program (Bock and Haggard, 1968). Multivariate analyses are appropriate when the design includes correlated dependent variables for which there are no conceptually distinct hypotheses. The hypotheses of this study relate to inter social role and intra occupational role conflict, so the dependent variables were grouped into two sets for analysis. The one item from the job related tension index was included with the inter role conflict set.

The hypotheses call for a two way sex by employee group design. However, it was felt that inter-role conflict would be highly related to the number of different social roles held. A three way number of social roles by sex by employee group design was chosen. The number of social roles was expected to affect inter role conflict but not intra role conflict. The alternative would be to have used number of social roles as a covariate in a sex by employee group design.

The multivariate program (Finn, 1972) considers the order of the main effects in compensating for unequal cells (see Tables 2 and 3).* The main effects were ordered number of social roles, sex, employee group. Then employee group and sex were reversed. In this way the major tests of the hypotheses could be made without confounding by number of social roles. Only main effects and interactions which were significant beyond $p \leq .05$ in the multivariate F test will be discussed.

There are several ways to interpret the contribution of each of the dependent variables to the overall effect. Significant univariate F ratios

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*Sample sizes differ because of missing data.

(which are liberal estimates of contribution) as well as step down F ratios (which are conservative estimates since they are mutually independent) are presented.

Results

Inter-social role conflict

Overall the results do not support the hypothesis that women experience greater inter social role conflict than men. There were no significant differences between men and women in how frequently they felt disturbed by feeling that their job tended to interfere with their family life and responsibilities or in the amount of conflict they felt between their two major social roles. The trend, however, was for men to report greater disturbance/conflict than women. This may be related to the fact that men report they spend significantly more time at work in an average day and on the average weekend. (See Table 4) The men in the sample also report that they spend significantly more time with their families on an average day than do the women. The women, who are spending less time at work and with their families than the men, spend significantly more time in an average day and on an average weekend on home maintenance and they report that their job conflicts with their home maintenance responsibilities.

A larger portion of the inter-role conflict variance is associated with the number of social roles held by the subjects. (See Table 5) Full time employees who also filled roles of spouse and parent reported more conflict between career and family responsibilities than did married employees or unmarried employees. As expected the unmarried employees spend more hours on an average day and on an average weekend on personal activities, while the married employees and those with children spend more daily and weekend hours with their families.

The significant interaction between number of social roles and sex was primarily a function of hours spent with the family on weekends and perceived conflict between job and personal activities. (See Table 6) Unmarried males spent less time with their families on weekends than unmarried females but married females with children spent less weekend time with their families than males with a comparable number of social roles. Unmarried females perceived less conflict between their career and personal activities than did unmarried males. Married females with families perceived more conflict between their careers and personal activities than did married males with families.

There also were significant differences between employee groups regarding inter role conflict. (See Table 7) The academic professionals report greater conflicts between career and family responsibilities. The nonacademic employees perceived the least career-family conflict. The same pattern holds for conflict reported between career and personal activities. This conflict is not due to longer work hours for the professional academics because the faculty spends the longest hours on the job both in an average day and on a typical weekend.

Inter occupational role conflict

Neither the number of social roles held nor employee's sex was related to intra occupational role conflict, measured by the job tension index. There only were sex differences in degree of job involvement, satisfaction with work and promotional opportunities and in all cases the males were more satisfied/involved than the females. (See Table 8)

Counter to the hypothesis, in academic settings job related tension does not covary with status. (See Table 9) Faculty reported the least job related tension, academic professionals the greatest. The other signifi-

cant dimension of employee group differences consisted of satisfaction with work and pay, experienced motivation and job involvement and was consistent with job status.

There were no significant interactions between sex and number of social roles or employee group and number of social roles on the job related questions. However, there was a significant sex by employee group interaction on the job related tension index. (See Table 10) Female faculty expressed a much higher level of job related tension than the male faculty; female professional academics and non academics reported less job related tension than males in these groups.

Interaction between sex and employee group appeared, too, with respect to the focus of motivation: faculty men and non academic women had a multi-faceted focus, while non academic men and faculty and academic professional women saw these aspects of performance as less important. The same general pattern held for satisfaction with supervision. The faculty women reported the lowest and faculty men the highest satisfaction with supervision. The pattern carried further to satisfaction with promotional opportunities. The faculty women were least, the faculty men most satisfied with supervision. The interaction pattern for satisfaction with work is somewhat different. The faculty women are the most satisfied with the work itself and the non academic women the least satisfied.

Discussion

Taken at face value these data dispel a number of myths concerning levels of inter social role conflict for employed women. The faculty, academic professional and non academic women, in fact, reported less perceived conflict between career and family responsibilities, though not significantly less, than the men. Why is the myth wrong? Is it a peculiarity of this

sample? Possibly, but there was no sex by number of social roles interaction. Women in all social role categories reported a lower level of career-family conflicts than men. It is possible that the women in this sample have a different frame of reference for evaluating inter social role conflict than the men. They may consider multiple demands upon their time as a way of life and thus tolerate a higher level of role overload than men. Most likely women, with husbands and families at home, who have chosen full time employment, have faced squarely the multiple demands on their time. They seem to be coping as well as the men with the career-family conflict. They do not appear to see a conflict between the time they spend as a career woman and as a wife or mother. In fact, on the average they spend less time working and less time in their family roles than the men. The women report spending more time in personal activities and home maintenance than the men.

What the women are not coping with well is job versus home maintenance. The women in the study expressed more conflict between job and home maintenance than the men and reported spending more time in an average day and on a typical weekend in home maintenance activities. Women with more social roles do not report spending differentially more time in home maintenance. Home maintenance becomes a greater point of occupational versus social role conflict for both men and women as their number of social roles increases.

Home maintenance is stereotypically a woman's role, and the women in our sample were no exception. They spend proportionately more time in these activities than the men and report significantly more conflict. Are they resentful? Would they be surprised to know that on the average these working women spend as much time daily in home maintenance activities as in family activities?

Turning to the job related variables, another generalization falls. It is not high level-high status jobs which are particularly prone to job related tension, but rather characteristics of the task itself. A position as a member of the teaching faculty at this university with its great personal freedom may be high status but it is not a high tension job. The academic professionals--holding administrative, extension and technical support jobs--appear to be at a difficult interface. Many of these employees deal with students and faculty in a service capacity--neither group known for their tact or patience. The academic professional also is a reasonably new job class. Other items embedded in the questionnaire indicate many of these employees are unclear about the scope of their responsibilities, and their relationships with their superiors; all work related experiences which might contribute to job related tension.

The sex by employee group interactions are particularly interesting because of the relatively inconsistent responses of the female faculty. The inconsistency is not so much between their relatively high level of job tension and high satisfaction with the work itself. Kahn et. al. (1964) found that satisfaction and intra occupational role conflict covaried in some samples. The faculty women, however, were least satisfied with the quality of their supervision and their promotional opportunities. The sample was stratified by department and sex, so the male and female faculty members are reacting to the same departmental heads and chairmen. The satisfaction differences are difficult to understand. The fact that the faculty women have lower rank than the men may explain some of the difference in their average satisfaction with promotional opportunities. Nevertheless, it is unclear why the faculty women, who have a clear promotion progression to follow, are so much less satisfied with promotional opportunities than the

academic professional women who have no tenure progression and in fact no more vested job security than the non academic women.

These data have drawn a very different picture of professional women than we might have expected. They spend less time working and in family role activities than the professional men and more time on personal activities and home maintenance. They perceive no more career-family responsibility conflict than the men but do see their careers as interfering with keeping up their homes. In their jobs, the women perceive no more job related tension than the men. They are significantly less involved with their jobs and are particularly dissatisfied with their opportunities for promotion. These women appear to have their multiple career and family roles surprisingly well synchronized. It seems likely, too, that their houses have dirt that only they can see.

TABLE 1

UIUC Response Rate for Job Attitude Survey

	Academic Professional	Faculty	Nonacademic
Eligibility rate = $\frac{\text{\# eligible returns}}{\text{total sample}}$	89%	82%	92%
Completion rate = $\frac{\text{\# usable returns}}{\text{\# eligible returns}}$	65%	63%	78%
Contact rate = $\frac{\text{\# total returns}}{\text{\# eligible returns}}$	73%	75%	84%
Refusal rate = $\frac{\text{\# refused or \# not usable}}{\text{\# total returns}}$	35%	37%	22%

Table 2

Cell Frequencies for Inter Role Conflict Analysis N = 481

Faculty

	Male	Female	Total
Single	7	19	26
Married	11	4	15
Family	46	8	54
Total	64	31	95

Academic Professional

	Male	Female	Total
Single	21	38	59
Married	40	32	72
Family	109	17	126
Total	170	87	257

Non Academic

	Male	Female	Total
Single	12	23	35
Married	8	30	38
Family	34	22	56
Total	54	75	129

Cell Frequencies for Intra Occupational Role Conflict N = 510

Group	Sex		
	Male	Female	Total
Faculty	64	33	97
Academic Professional	172	90	262
Non academic	62	89	151
Total	298	212	510

Table 4

Inter Role Conflict Main Effect -- Sex

Multivariate $F = 11.94$; $p \leq .01$

	Daily Hours - Job*	Daily Hours - Home Maintenance	Daily Hours - Personal Activities	Daily Hours - Family	Weekend Hours - Job	Weekend Hours - Home Maintenance	Conflict between Job and Home Maintenance
Males	9.67	1.35	2.68	2.89	4.95	5.18	2.07
Females	9.27	2.26	2.86	2.26	3.05	7.84	2.24
F =	5.25	36.62	2.85	.14	32.42	77.60	8.22
p ≤	.02	.01	.09	.71	.01	.01	.01
step F =	3.72	34.33	20.30	6.80	36.02	17.90	6.64
p ≤	.05	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01

* Includes a lunch hour

Table 5

Inter Role Conflict Main Effect -- Number of Social Roles

Multivariate $F = 21.76$; $p \leq .01$

	Job versus Family Tension	Daily hours-Personal Activities	Daily hours - Family	Weekend hours Personal Activities	Weekend Hours Family	Conflict Between Job and Home Maintenance	Conflict Between Job and Family Responsibilities
Unmarried	2.28	3.99	1.10	15.63	4.34	1.78	1.51
Married	2.70	2.73	2.78	10.92	9.63	2.25	2.50
Married with Family	2.83	2.14	3.35	8.28	12.15	2.25	2.91
$F =$	27.70	73.23	104.48	100.17	145.01	13.98	102.08
$p \leq$	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01
step F	27.70	55.84	68.32	32.57	8.60	1.00	15.72
$p \leq$	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01

Table 6

Inter Role Conflict Interaction -- Number of Social Roles and Sex

Multivariate $F = 1.79$; $p \leq .05$

	Weekend Hours Family		Conflict between Job and Personal Activities	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Unmarried	2.95	5.04	2.78	2.39
Married	9.32	9.90	2.56	2.67
Married with Family	12.26	11.70	2.49	2.63
$F =$	6.40		6.13	
$p \leq$	.01		.01	
step $F =$	1.26		4.76	
$p \leq$	.26		.03	

Table 7

Inter Role Conflict Main Effect -- Employee Group

Multivariate F = 3.50; $p \leq .01$

	Job versus Family Tension	Daily Hours Job	Weekend Hours-Job	Conflict between Job and Personal Activities	Conflict between Job and Family
Faculty	2.59	9.80	5.61	2.44	2.44
Academic Professionals	2.93	9.66	4.37	2.69	2.66
Non academics	2.17	8.99	2.78	2.33	2.05
F =	26.39	6.96	9.58	5.30	10.03
$p \leq$	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01
step F =	26.39	3.13	6.01	1.07	.83
$p \leq$	.01	.04	.01	.34	.44

Table 8

Sex Differences on Job Related Variables

Multivariate F = 5.35; p ≤ .01

	Job Involvement	Work	Promotional Opportunities
Males	9.62	40.08	10.54
Females	8.44	38.33	8.44
F =	26.14	4.28	11.23
p ≤	.01	.04	.01
step F =	31.05	3.66	11.53
p ≤	.01	.06	.01

Table 9

Employee Group Differences on Job Related Variables

Multivariate F = 6.32; $p \leq .01$

	Job Related Tension	Experienced Motivation	Job Involvement	Promotion	Work	Pay
Faculty	36.02	13.70	9.93	9.56	41.26	15.75
Academic Professional	39.12	13.26	9.37	10.71	40.54	14.09
Non academic	37.89	12.84	7.78	7.29	35.93	12.47
Uni F =	6.26	6.21	24.81	9.88	15.52	7.52
$p \leq$	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01
step F	6.26	5.58	19.19	9.60	11.89	4.23
$p \leq$	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.02

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